

June 15, 1954

Dr. Albert Kalner
Biology Department
Brandeis University
Waltham, Mass.

Dear Dr. Kalner:


Thank you for your inquiry about Dr. Zinder. I have been very well impressed by his continuing research record at the Rockefeller Institute since he completed his studies here, and am pleased to note the good impression he left with you and your colleagues.

In all candor, I would however have to admit the cogency of your reservations on his suitability for this particular appointment. Zinder's training would have seemed somewhat narrow by the standards imposed on an undergraduate training program, and if he had less occasion to apply his strongest field, medical bacteriology, the result might not be mutually satisfactory. It must have occurred to you also that Dr. Zinder's training and interests have to do with research almost to the exclusion of teaching. I believe he might do very well in a position closer to his specialty, but would have to leave his suitability for your faculty to your own judgment. Unless his research abilities carried very strong weight with your department, I would doubt that this is the position for the man, or the man for the position.

Perhaps I share the defect to which you allude, at least I am not sure what you mean by "physiology". Perhaps Zinder was complaining of the hodge-podge of cytology and amateurish biochemistry that is too often taught under this name. If you mean bacterial rather than "general" physiology, on the other hand, his complaint may be shortsighted.

If these remarks do not discourage you from proceeding with Zinder, and I am only doing my best to give you a frank appraisal, you may not be interested in an alternative suggestion, namely P. David Skaar, who is now at Cold Spring Harbor. Skaar took his degree with Sonneborn (on Paramecium) then spent two years with me and continues to work in bacterial genetics. His research output has seemed less fruitful than Zinder's, but I would judge him his intellectual peer, and his biological training (mostly in ecology) is far broader and doubtless more relevant to your teaching duties. I will send you any further information you request; you can probably get more from Bryson or Sonneborn.

Yours sincerely,


Joshua Lederberg
Associate Professor of Genetics